

Written Testimony of
Joseph Quartiero, Town & City Clerk of Torrington

HB 5035, An Act Reducing Mandates for Municipalities

February 22, 2012
Planning & Development Committee

Good Morning, I am Joseph Quartiero, Town & City Clerk of Torrington. I am a retired State Policeman, having spent 14 years on patrol and desk duty, two years as an inspector in the State's Attorneys' Office, and nine years with the Western District Major Crime Squad.

I'm here to testify in support of the Governor's Bill 5035 which would clarify that an agency's personal records would be protect from disclosure under the Freedom of Information. Connecticut General Statutes 1-217 should not apply to the hundreds of documents within the office of the town clerks. The Governor's proposal returns 1-217 to its original intent before the Court's ruling last summer.

I am here to give you my perspective both as a clerk and a policeman. During my career as a State Policeman, my name and phone number along with many other State Policemen who resided in Torrington and many other towns was readily available in the Torrington phone directory as well as the city directory, which was published each year and is now part of the city of Torrington's records archive and available to anyone wishing to search our public records.

At no time during my entire career, either I or any other policeman that I know, has ever had any issue with people trying to locate and harm us. My cruiser and all other state policemen's vehicles were seen parked in drive ways of our homes throughout the state during our off duty hours and anyone driving by knew a policeman lived there. It would be very easy for anyone to ascertain which policeman lived there just by asking neighbors. Local police officers are well known to everyone who lives in their town, and if anyone wanted to find out where they lived, they would not need to access the city clerk records to determine an address. Many local police officers are appointed by the Boards of Safety of their towns, and their names and address are listed in the newspapers upon their appointment. Upon graduation, State Policemen are listed in the paper regarding which Troops they are assigned to along with their town of residence.

At no time during my eighteen years as a City Clerk has anyone ever come to my office and asked for an address of any policeman, fireman, etc. I cannot testify that no one has ever searched our records for any policeman's address as we cannot police our vault or our public terminals eight hours a day.

All judges had practices as attorneys in their hometowns or nearby towns and anyone could easily locate them with minimal effort. I see no need to redact any information concerning the address of anyone including policemen, firemen, lawyers, judges, etc. from any town records. It is very easy to determine where people live and redacting them from city clerk records would be pointless, let alone time consuming and would create a financial burden on town budgets. It is physically impossible to search our vast amount of records to determine who should be redacted.

The Governor's proposed changes in HB 5035, corrects a situation for town clerks, assessors, tax collectors and numerous municipal offices that is currently unworkable with the recent Supreme Court decision.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I would be pleased to take any questions that you may have.

Respectfully submitted,
Joseph L. Quartiero, City and Town Clerk